

The Sea Grant Files
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Tips for Anglers

Hi, my name is Jesse Schomberg and you are listening to The Sea Grant Files. This weekend is not only Mother's Day ... Hi Mom! ... but also

drum roll followed by the sound of a spin rod being cast.... Alt: trumpet fanfare?

The 70th annual Minnesota Governor's Fishing Opener! As of this Saturday, Minnesota's fishing season begins. That means well over a million people with Minnesota fishing licenses will be casting for walleye, sauger, northern pike and lake trout ... as well as bass in some regions.

Don Schreiner, Minnesota Sea Grant's fisheries specialist predicts it will be a fairly typical opener this year ... saying you might land a walleye or two if you fish shallow and slow. Don ... a wise man ... says if the walleyes aren't biting, go for crappies.

If you are planning to use your rod and reel this year, Minnesota Sea Grant has some other advice to offer, too.

First, follow the Minnesota rules! This includes having a fishing license, honoring the bag limits and abiding by state aquatic invasive species laws, like properly disposing of unwanted bait. No...don't release your spare minnows, that's illegal. Put unwanted bait into the trash ... that includes minnows, leeches, worms and fish parts. Most Minnesota anglers comply with this rule and hopefully you and your fishing buddies are part of this crowd.

Minnesota Sea Grant's Aquatic Invasive Species Program Coordinator Doug Jensen says that he tries to only take as much live bait out fishing as he thinks he will need. Minimizing spare bait means you won't be left with a dilemma at the end of the day. If you want to keep unused minnows or leeches, you must pour out the lake water from the bait container at the access and refill it with bottled or tap water you've brought from home.

If you are fishing from a boat, remember that you need a watercraft license and a personal floatation device for every person in the boat. You also need to follow a few extra rules to Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers. You must clean all aquatic plants, zebra mussels and other species from watercraft, trailers, and water-related equipment before leaving any water access or shoreland. And, before leaving you must also drain water from your boat's bilge, livewell and baitwell.

Don't forget to keep those drain plugs out and water-draining devices open while transporting watercraft!

Remember, it is illegal to transport watercraft without removing the drain plug. It is illegal to transport aquatic plants, zebra mussels, or other prohibited species on any roadway. And, it is illegal to transport water from Minnesota lakes or rivers.

What is legal? Having fun. Dennis Pratt, retired fisheries biologist with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources says his biggest pet peeve is when people don't seem to be having fun while spending a day out fishing.

Elaine Krueger, an angler from Pine City agrees. "Of course I like catching fish but that isn't the sole reason I say, 'I'm going fishing,'" she said. "Fishing is about being outside and enjoying the sights and sounds of nature. If you are fishing, be happy!" is Elaine's advice.

On another note, please don't litter. In fact, consider taking a spare bag with you so that you can pick up any trash you might see. We share our lakes with fish, wildlife and other humans, so keep them clean and don't leave or toss garbage in the lake. Oh boy, and don't defecate in the parking areas. That's just gross!

Also, be courteous of other anglers and the fishery. Give other anglers space and respect personal property. Keep off of privately owned shoreline and docks and don't step on the redds ... redds are fish nests. Treat catch-and-release fish gently and return them to the water quickly. Be humane to the fish you plan to eat.

Here are some tips for catching fish.

Hang out with the fish in inlets and outlets. These areas are generally cooler and funnel food for the fish.

The hotter it gets outside the deeper you'll need to fish. This is because fish tend to like cool temperatures and will retreat to deeper, cooler water as the temperature outside rises. During dusk and dawn fish will generally come to more shallow water to feed. Research the specific type of fish you're trying to catch to learn more.

Choose the right bait. You can't go wrong with live bait such as crickets, worms, minnows and leeches. For artificial lures, try a jig. They can catch a variety of freshwater fish.

Largemouth bass and northern pike like to ambush prey from luscious weed beds or from structures such as downed trees. The weed beds that lead to deeper water and create a break line can be hot holes.

On days with a strong breeze you can try fishing closer to shore to feed. Watch for drift lines and follow them, they will lead to bait fish, which will in turn lead to big fish.

And, be safe out there ... bring drinking water, food. Dress in layers and for gosh sakes, bring your life jacket! Make sure not to leave behind any hooks where you fish or near the shore of the water, they can hurt wildlife, domestic pets and other people.

Set a great example, help people who might be struggling to unload or load their watercraft at the boating ramp.

You might also run the motor of your personal watercraft for a few seconds to discharge water before leaving a water access. Especially after leaving zebra mussel and spiny waterflea infested waters think about spraying your boat and equipment with high-pressure water or rinsing your gear with very hot water or letting your gear dry for at least 5 days. The arrival of an aquatic invasive species in a lake can lead to costly and often irreversible problems; knowing this, more people than ever are taking action to Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers!

Oh yeah, and did I say don't dump your bait?

Keep your line tight and have a great fishing season!

This episode of the Sea Grant Files was produced by Sharon Moen, Mariah Schumacher, Maija Jenson, KUMD, and me, Jesse Schomberg. To listen to more episodes of The Sea Grant Files and to subscribe to our podcast, visit the Minnesota Sea Grant website at www-dot-seagrant-dot-umn-dot-edu. You can also follow Minnesota Sea Grant on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Thanks for listening.